

Amherst Budget Coordinating Group
Summary Points – June 24, 2010

At our June 24th meeting, the members of the Budget Coordinating Group agreed that the following points would be conveyed to our home boards and committees:

- 1) That a BCG Update would be included on the agendas of each of our home boards and committees in order to review these summary points, and that any feedback would be relayed to BCG at our next meeting. This is our shared expectation going forward.
- 2) That the soon-to-be approved FY11 State budget is consistent with our projections for a 4% overall reduction in State Aid. An adjustment will be necessary at Fall Town Meeting to address the shift of a small amount of Chapter 70 funds to stimulus funds, requiring a technical reduction to the appropriation amount for the elementary budget (approximately \$100,000). Town Meeting action will not be necessary for the Region budget because assessments to the four towns are not impacted by this shift in funding sources of approximately \$200,000.
 - a) This will have no effect on programs or the total revenue available to fund them, because the reduction will be covered by reimbursement from the State with stimulus funds; such funds are treated like grants and are not appropriated by Town Meeting. (A similar adjustment was made in FY09 to address a mid-year cut to Chapter 70 money reimbursed by stimulus funds.)
 - b) This will be tracked going forward to ensure the school budgets aren't starting from an artificially reduced FY11 baseline in FY12.
- 3) That FY12 looks to be another challenging year for State Aid as effects of the recession linger, and with two tax rollback questions on the November ballot threatening significant reductions in State revenue. Level-funded State Aid looks to be the best-case scenario. As examples, using rough assumptions: a 5% cut in State Aid would leave a \$1.6 million budget shortfall; level-funded State Aid would leave a \$500,000 shortfall.
- 4) That to build on and improve our budget calendar coordination efforts, BCG reps will: consider the significant markers in their individual budget processes and the advance or follow-up time each requires; create preliminary timelines that reflect those; and submit them to John Musante to combine into one draft Master Calendar in advance of our September 23rd meeting. That calendar will be tweaked as necessary, and once BCG believes it has a working model, it will be presented to each of the home boards and committees for their feedback and endorsement. Such a calendar will ultimately include or help to facilitate the planning of other Town Meeting-related budget events, such as those put on by the Town Meeting Coordinating Committee.
- 5) That to improve the clarity of the budget information for Town Meeting, the Town, Schools and Libraries will continue to seek better consistency in the presentation of similar types of

information. We recognize that the different structures of each organization don't necessarily allow for exact parallels.

- a) The Schools are working to include information on grants and other outside funding sources, with details about the positions and programs they support, in a matrix similar to how the Town presents such information
- b) For consideration at the September 23rd meeting, the Town, Schools and Libraries will prepare models they believe best express the number of people currently and historically employed in the different sectors of each enterprise. The goal is to be able to articulate staffing levels and trends in a meaningful way, without getting bogged down by different definitions of full- and part-time employees.